1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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The fishing grounds and the still productive fruit trees of the old villages were considered to be the domain of the Trumaí, and these rights were apparently respected by others. When the village moved in search of new land, it was usually to one of the old sites, whose name the new village would take.

The Trumaí were once feared by the other tribes of the upper Xingú and were evidently a relatively numerous and vigorous people. However, when Quain visited them in 1938, they numbered only 43, and only ten years later, in 1948, the population had shrunken to a meagre 25.[11] Their small numbers had forced them to abandon village life once since Quain's visit, but they subsequently reunited in a new community.[11a]

Warfare

The topography of the flat upper Xingú Basin encourages considerable contact between tribes. The waterways are extensive and have importance beyond subsistence, as they are the chief avenues of trade and warfare. Communication through the river and flood plain system is the main reason for the high degree of cultural homogeneity that has been achieved by these tribes of diverse origins and languages. Intertribal relations are not confined to trade and warfare, but enter the spheres of social organization, ceremonialism and mythology.

Intertribal bonds within the upper Xingú Basin were based on peaceful relations between the tribes. These tribes formed part of a bounded social system in which groups outside the area did not take part. The Bakairí Indians of the Paranatinga River were on a friendly basis with the headwaters groups only because they had once lived on the Batoví River. Other tribes were uniformly enemies, regardless of cultural or linguistic affinities. Despite this peaceful interaction among the upper Xingú villages, there was considerable mutual fear and hostility between them which was expressed in witchcraft, petty thievery and intimidation. The practice of sorcery upon other villages is especially significant, in that sorcery is used in nearly all cultures only between people who share close interpersonal ties. This illustrates better than anything else the high degree of intervillage integration in the upper Xingú River Basin. The component groups constitute far more than a culture area — they form a society.

Despite the nominal peace within the upper Xingú area, the Trumaí lived in dread of their neighbors, and with good reason.[12] Situated

[11] Oberg 1953, p. 4.

[11a] Latest reports state that a measles epidemic has wrought great havoc, and that the few survivors have all joined other groups.

[12] Although fear of neighboring groups is general in the upper Xingú, de Lima (1949, p. 25) noted it to be especially strong among the numerically weak Trumaí.

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taboos and permissible marriages were a part of kinship-determined behavior and will be treated below.

Kinship Terminology

Everyone within the Trumaí village classified everyone else by a term of relationship. Since the community was small, most of these designations expressed a demonstrable bond of consanguinity or affinity, although even outsiders were placed within the kinship system. This was done by establishing a kin tie with one Trumaí, whereupon the rest of the village could automatically place the outsider in the proper context.

Much of the data on the kinship system is uncertain for a number of reasons. The high death rate of the Trumaí, their lack of interest in tracing genealogies, and, most important, a taboo on the names of the dead made the recounting of family lines difficult. Moreover, there is some indication that the Trumaí system was changing rapidly. Many descriptive categories for classifying collateral kinsmen were falling into disuse and being replaced by classificatory terms. The result is an extreme looseness of nomenclature, as can be seen from the accompanying list of terms collected by three ethnologists.[3]

Term	Quain	Oberg[4]	Wagley[5]
Ego's generation			
sibling	apizi*		
younger brother	takwai (v)	ahoát* (m. sp.)	ha-heát* (m. sp.)
	opat (r)	takwai (w. sp.)	ha-pisí (w. sp.)
older brother		apisí (m. or w.sp.)	ha-pisí (m. or w. sp.)
sister	hatdifle		ha-dufle (m. sp.)
younger sister	ta'yj	tain (m. sp.)	
		takwai (w. sp.)	ha-takwai (w.sp.)
older sister		apisí (m. or w.sp.)	ha-pisí (w. sp.)

[3] The three lists of Trumaí kinship terms are listed below, since they, in a sense, complete and correct one another. Quain's list is admittedly incomplete and contains several errors. Wagley's terms likewise are incomplete and based on short interviews with informants during his brief stay among the Trumaí. Oberg says nothing about his Trumaí informants, and neither Oberg nor Wagley collected referential terms. The divergencies, then, may reflect misunderstandings on the part of the ethnologists or informants, or they may actually reflect changes that are taking place in Trumaí society.

[4] Oberg 1953, p. 119.

[5] Wagley, personal communication.

* The prefix "ha" (Wagley and Quain) or "a" (Oberg and Quain) is the Trumaí first person possessive.

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575 the group, and they never participated in any of its activities. Occasionally men gathered in the village center during the day. but at night the circle always formed, generally lasting from sundown until about nine
[516] o'clock. In the afternoon it was often the scene of wrestling matches. Talk usually went on then also, but the gatherings were smaller than at night.

[521] At night most of the men were present, and conversation ranged over a variety of topics. Of greatest interest were neighboring tribes, past warfare and present threats to peace. Gossip, usually about sex, found ready ears. This was the time when the chief made most of his speeches, and the time when plans for a fishing trip, for salt manufacture, or for a journey to the Waurá for pots were discussed. The men's circle was
[756] also the place where the shaman practiced his art, and, as noted above, where grievances were aired.

[626] The social life of the males was centered almost completely in these gatherings, and it was in them that the mechanisms of village authority and social control were expressed. Also, the men's circle underlined the cleavage between the activities of the men and of the women. The women had no formal grouping such as the men's circle, but they showed
[562] solidarity when the need arose. While men were dominant, as Quain
[578] said, they "look on the women as an ungoverned force," and open group quarrels were not infrequent between the sexes.

Status

554 *Aek*, the Trumaí word for chief, also denoted membership in the
565 upper half of what is nominally a status class. Members of the lower
178 half of this class were loosely referred to as *camara*, a term which,
622 according to Galvão, probably diffused into the region from rural
624 Brazil, where workers are called *camaradas*.[10] There was some uncertainty on the part of Quain's informants as to who were members of the *aek* division. In general, it included the chief, the two sub-chiefs, and their families. But while the status appears to have been hereditary, its transmission was loose and uncertain. For instance, Maibu was an *aek*, but he refused to classify his brothers as such. However, the fathers of both Maibu and Katauka, one of the sub-chiefs, were *aek*. Matiwana's three daughters and his son derived their status from him, further supporting the case for patrilineality. On the other hand, the children of one of the daughters were *aek*, even though their father was a *camara*. The significance of being *aek* had probably declined with the weakening of leadership patterns and the lessened importance of the sub-chiefs. Today, the *aek-camara* division is non-functional, membership is confused, and, except for the chieftainship, it is correlated only vaguely

[10] Galvão 1949, p. 40.

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with prestige. Aloari, who later became chief, was classified as a *camara* at the time of Quain's visit.

At the top of the Trumaí prestige scale was the chief. His authority was limited, but he was more respected than any other man. The two sub-chiefs enjoyed some, but not much, prestige. Matiwana was an old man, and old age decreases status among the Trumaí. He took the lead in group curing ceremonies, however, and was the repository of much Trumaí lore and learning. Nor was Katauka, the other sub-chief, very influential. And neither official had the privilege of "talking" to the people as Maibu did. That Katauka was a shaman and Matiwana the chief curer of the village contributed more to their prestige than did their position as sub-chiefs or their membership in the *aek* class. Tun, the shaman, and Oirupa, the sorcerer, ranked just below the chief in importance. The former enjoyed some standing as his prognostications of enemy movements were relied upon and respected by everybody. Oirupa had added power only because he was feared.

The only other criteria of status were youth and aggressiveness. Property was not a point of prestige, but those whose assertive attitudes gave them some status and influence were also those who manifested an accumulative attitude toward property. Youth and sexual prowess were highly regarded. Boasting about sexual exploits was usually done privately, but great pride was taken in them. This was related to the general esteem in which youth, size and vigor were held. To be a successful wrestler, therefore, enhanced a man's position. The Trumaí were also impressed by Quain's height and wanted to know what kind of medicines white men used to make them so tall. There was no warrior class and no special status for success in combat, except insofar as it was an indication of strength and courage.

As noted above, the status of old men was very low, except when they had special knowledge or office. Yet these attributes did not protect Matiwana from being contemptuously referred to as an old man. Moreover, Quain was severely criticized for giving presents to old Yahu, most of whose property had already been claimed by others, since the Trumaí did not think it proper that one so old should have any possessions beyond fishing and hunting equipment and other necessities. A favorite insult among the Trumaí was to tell someone he was old, and by implication that he no longer bathed or was able to fornicate.

Prestige variations, on the whole, were not great in the Trumaí village. The community had no clearly defined social groupings based on status, nor were there social mechanisms for human exploitation. Variations in wealth were slight, and their only significance was that one man might have more tools and trinkets than another. It is possible, however, that before the Trumaí had declined to their present low estate, prestige and authority were more clearly patterned, as they still were in the Kamayurá village.

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CHAPTER SIX

The Death of a Culture

Today there are but twenty-five remaining Trumaí. The fact that they disbanded once during the recent past shows that this small number approaches a critical point at which such a culture is no longer socially viable. If the present population trend continues, Trumaí society will definitely end, and, with the complete assimilation of the descendants of the Trumaí into other tribes, Trumaí culture, except for those elements of it that have been adopted by their neighbors, will belong to the past.

Primitive cultures and the populations that transmitted them are disappearing in many parts of the world today. In most instances, however, they are being destroyed by extended face-to-face contacts with Western society. This is not precisely the case with the Trumaí. Here, there was no large scale transmission of Western culture and no direct interaction with Brazilian society. But slight though the contact of the upper Xingú Indians with the whites was, it resulted in the introduction of respiratory infections that contributed greatly to their depopulation. In this sense, the white man is responsible for the impending death of the Trumaí.

Although the Trumaí were still carrying on their village life during Quain's residence and were to continue to do so, certain changes were taking place in their culture which were symptomatic of the fundamental instability induced by their low numbers.

It is immediately apparent that their weakness made the Trumaí vulnerable to other tribes, both the nominally friendly ones of the upper Xingú Basin, and the hostile ones of the surrounding country. In 1938 the Trumaí could not have successfully withstood a strong Suyá or Yuruna raid, nor could they have launched an attack upon the Suyá for women, as did the more vigorous Kamayurá. Indeed, the Trumaí had good reason to fear the least sound in the jungle at night.

Also, the Trumaí were held in low esteem by their immediate neighbors at the time of Quain's study. This was a severe blow to their *elan*, and it undoubtedly affected their self-image. It led, too, to more concrete results. As noted above, other tribes took Trumaí women during their most fertile years, and it is almost certain that the few "outside" women, who were brought into the Trumaí village through marriage, failed to restore the balance. Moreover, there were no "outside" men

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105 182 648 in the Trumaí community, for, as Oberg notes, no adult male would choose to live with a people of such low status.[1]

105 162 It might be expected that the Trumaí could have compensated for this drain by raising their birth rate. However, in this population of 43 persons, there were only ten children, an extremely small number when the low average life span is considered. Furthermore, only two of the children were females. Of the approximately twelve women who 105 were capable of bearing children, only one was pregnant, and the others 163 were urging her to abort her child. Thus, infanticide and abortion were 161 taking a heavy toll in the Trumaí village.

847 845 The custom of killing twins and of spacing births three or four years apart are reported by Oberg for the Kamayurá,[2] and these factors may well have been present in the Trumaí situation. The long post-natal [171] taboo on sexual intercourse had the same effect. Wagley, who studied the dying but equally unacculturated Tapirapé, found that traditional practices were contributing to the complete depopulation of that group also.[3]

105 161 178 154 But among the Trumaí there is still another and less tangible dimension. Abortion may have been urged on a pregnant woman because she had no husband, but how is one to explain the killing of two of Aloari's children without his consent, or the fact that there were eight male and only two female children in the community? The limited information available suggests that the Trumaí were purposely restricting their number and committing suicide, perhaps unintentionally, in the process. Two reasons for this extreme behavior may be hypothesized: first, the impasse in which the Trumaí found themselves because of the steady depopulation made them so personally insecure and apathetic regarding both the present and the future that they were no longer willing to rear sizable families, despite their evident devotion to children; and second, they may not have thought it possible to produce the surplus necessary to support such families. Actually, however, even with their diminished numbers the Trumaí could have increased their food supply.

105 511 433 226 Their lowered standard of living was due to more than attitudes. Loss of population no doubt also decreased the yield of Trumaí fishing and therefore limited their chief source of protein. To be sure, bow and arrow fishing was little affected, but fish poisoning, the only communal subsistence technique practiced by them, was much less effective when employed by a small group, for a few people can adequately poison only smaller watercourses and branches of lagoons, while a greater number can cover larger streams and whole lagoons. In the latter circumstance, both the take would be larger and larger species would be available. Moreover, when the waters are heavily poisoned and enough people are present to reap the "harvest," there is less chance of fish escaping. Thus, up to

[1] Oberg 1953, p. 15. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 62. [3] Wagley 1940.